

Replanting the Trees of the Hudson Valley

The Challenge

When Henry Hudson explored his namesake river and valley in 1609, a forested landscape protected the water. Wooded uplands and healthy riparian zones functioned unencumbered by invasive species or human encroachment. The tributaries and their main stem ran clean into the estuary south of today's Troy, NY.

The Hudson River Valley is now well populated—with people who care about their region and its water. Their challenge is to live, work, and recreate, while keeping on with the great restoration of the Hudson.

The Solution

Just as it was in 1609, trees and functioning riparian zones still offer the best protection for water quality. The Hudson River Estuary Program, of the NY Department of Environmental Conservation, the Hudson River Alliance, and regional watershed groups have long championed riparian buffers as a cornerstone of watershed protection.

A lengthy list of work is already ongoing by partners in the region. State and local leaders recognized the good work being done, particularly on the agricultural front, and identified urban and community forestry efforts that could plug some unattended gaps.

A new U&CF program—Trees for Tribs—was launched to fill a void. The concept was simple and, so far, successful: give away as many trees as people are willing to plant along the river.

The Hudson River Estuary Program integrated Trees for Tribs with its other offerings and provides a program coordinator to evaluate sites and help communities achieve successful plantings. An I-95 Corridor grant from the U.S. Forest Service helped build on early momentum.

The project helps NYSDEC meet its 2005-2009 Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda targets, which call for partnership projects to implement a riparian tree planting program.

“Children, families, communities—out by the riverbank planting trees to protect the Hudson. That’s what’s happening here.”



Volunteers planting native trees and shrubs along the Esopus Creek, a tributary of the Hudson, Mt. Tremper, NY. This was a joint project with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County. (Photo credit: Kevin Grieser, NYSDEC)

Resulting Benefits

“Children, families, communities—out by the riverbank, planting trees to protect the Hudson,” said Anne Archie, U.S. Forest Service Field Representative to the Northeast. “That’s what’s happening here.”

Trees for Tribs wraps in social, educational, and environmental outcomes. In just the first planting season:

- 7,000 feet of stream bank addressed
- 2,250 trees planted
- Eight community-scale volunteer plantings completed, and four smaller ones
- Over 225 volunteers

Sharing success

Trees for Tribs exemplifies the visionary grassroots projects that bring new partners together with ones owning longstanding records of success. Plantings often involve children, schools, and families volunteering to protect their own front yards, as riverfronts are known in river towns.

When forestry work goes on at the headwaters, the results are shared all the way downstream. In this case that means down from the highlands of the Hudson River Valley watershed, through the Hudson Estuary, under the George Washington Bridge and Interstate 95, and out past Manhattan to the Atlantic.

“The Hudson is the major river crossing the I-95 Corridor in New York,” Archie reminded. “This is our chance to seed new life in the pressured ecosystems of the river valley.”



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